



COMMITTEE STATEMENT

**Opening Statement of Rep. Russ Fulcher (R-ID), Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services Hearing: “A Call to Action:
Modernizing the Community Services Block Grant.”
November 3, 2021**

(As prepared for delivery)

“For decades the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program has empowered civil institutions and local governments to serve low-income individuals and communities.

“Congress has not reauthorized the CSBG since 1998, and I think it’s safe to say that our economy has changed tremendously over the past two decades to warrant a closer look at the program. We have an opportunity before us today to examine areas of the CSBG program that need to be reformed and we need to consider ways to strengthen it.

“It is our job to make sure this program operates as effectively as possible. In addition to adding greater accountability to low-income community members and taxpayers, we should look for ways to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy, encourage innovation, and ensure policymakers have essential information about how the program meets the needs of low-income Americans, helping them to move toward stability, opportunity, and self-reliance.

“We should not be content to have vulnerable, low-income, and impoverished Americans remain locked in their current economic position. Neither should we be content to leave federal programs 'as is' simply because it is easier than improving them. Our programs to help those in need – including CSBG – should all be focused on helping to raise individuals out of poverty and move them into the workforce.

“One important way we can transform these programs is through a greater focus on outcomes. We need measurable outcomes from our federal safety net programs.

“Our safety net exists to assist those who are most in need, but reforms need to be made to ensure they work for the people they are intended to serve. A greater emphasis on program performance will ensure that federal anti-poverty programs are successfully helping individuals move out of poverty and toward self-sufficiency.

“Lastly, as we re-examine CSBG and other social safety net programs, we must protect faith-based providers.

“Faith-based organizations and charitable non-profits have been a backbone of our country’s efforts to serve those in poverty since our nation’s founding.

“Faith-based organizations provide greatly needed material resources to low-income Americans, but they are also uniquely positioned to provide relational capital and spiritual support to them as well. Helping individuals out of poverty requires more than just material aid. Faith-based organizations work tirelessly every day to serve Americans living in poverty and support their general well-being.

“Undermining the right of faith-based organizations to operate in accord with their conscience harms the tradition of charity that strengthens our communities. Faith-based providers should be able to participate in government programs without having to change how they live out their faith, with all showing due respect for one another. We must protect the rights of religious organizations to hire employees in accordance with their faith.

“There are more than 19,000 religious organizations that participate in the CSBG program. Their absence would create an enormous service gap.

“It is our responsibility to make our nation’s anti-poverty programs the best they can be. We can do this by encouraging modernization and innovation, as well as transparency and accountability.

“I look forward to hearing from the witnesses today on how we can transform this program into one that helps impoverished Americans achieve.”

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